



# DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

*Managing California's Working Lands*

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## DEPT. OF CONSERVATION, USDA, LOCAL LAND TRUST PERMANENTLY PRESERVE FEDORA FARM FOR AGRICULTURE

SACRAMENTO – Federal, State, and local organizations have partnered to permanently set aside for agriculture a Sutter County ranch potentially in the path of development. The California Department of Conservation (DOC), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust have created an agricultural conservation easement on the Fedora Farm between the Sacramento River and the Sutter Buttes, working with the family to ensure it will never be developed.

Landowner Sibley Fedora's ancestors migrated to the United States on the Mayflower and acquired the property in the late 1800s. Fedora was raised on the farm, lives there with his wife, Margaret, and farms the land with his sons, Brian and Chris. About 300 of the conservation easement's 376 acres are planted in mature walnut trees. The rest are irrigated vegetables such as beans, grains, wheat and safflower. The commodities are sold all over the world.

"It's rare for a property to remain in one family for this long of a time," said Fedora. "Most properties are sold from one generation to the next, but having the farm in our family for so long and having been raised on the property and raising my own family here makes it that much more special. I never thought I would own the land myself, but when it fell into foreclosure in 1985, I just couldn't let it go."

The entire Fedora Farm is 475 acres, in three separate portions, one of which is adjacent to the Sacramento River. The US Fish and Wildlife Service identifies this area, about two miles away from the small town of Meridian, as within the Butte Sink Wildlife Management Area, noted for having the highest concentration of waterfowl per acre in the world. Most of the Fedora Farm's soils are rated as prime farmland, according to the DOC's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. The development potential comes from

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*The Department of Conservation's mission is to balance today's needs with tomorrow's challenges and foster intelligent, sustainable, and efficient use of California's energy, land, and mineral resources.*

recreational uses near the Sacramento River that have the potential for commercial development. Fedora has been approached to sell his property to develop a landing strip for easier access for out-of-town sportsmen.

The agricultural conservation easement, placed on 376-acres of the property, was purchased and is held by the land trust with participation from the landowner and additional funding partners, the DOC's California Farmland Conservancy Program and the NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

"Many qualities meet in this one farm," says Carlos Suarez, State Conservationist for NRCS in California. "The rich history, the prime soils for producing high quality food, and the role the area plays in waterfowl habitat, all combine to make it an excellent candidate for farmland protection through this easement," he said.

"This conservation agreement is a win-win for everyone involved," said land trust President Rick Geddes. "The Fedora family keep working their newly-protected prime farmland with both DOC and NRCS supporting ongoing agricultural activities, and the land trust fulfills its mission to protect the land and natural resources of the region for future generations. We look forward to partnering with the Fedora Family to steward their land in recognition of the importance of preserving working agricultural lands and the heritage of family farms in our region."

"We congratulate the Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust and the Fedora family on the creation of this conservation easement," Department of Conservation Director Mark Nechodom said. "We appreciate the work the land trust does to preserve the productive farmlands of Sutter County and to help maintain a viable agricultural economy in the region. We're very pleased to be a partner in this effort."

**About the Department of Conservation's California Farmland Conservancy Program:** Begun in 1996, the CFCP has provided more than \$83 million in funding to permanently shield more than 57,000 acres of the state's best agricultural land from development. For more information, visit: [www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp).

**About the Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust:** For the past 25 years, the Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust, formerly known as the Middle Mountain Foundation, has enhanced conservation awareness throughout the Sutter Buttes area including Sutter, Yuba, and Colusa counties. After merging with the Yuba-Sutter Land Trust in 2007, the foundation expanded its efforts to address regional concerns. Currently the SBRLT offers a comprehensive education and interpretive program that provides limited access into the Sutter Buttes. For more information, visit: <http://www.sutterbutteslandtrust.org/the-land-trust/>

**About the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program:** The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value of the conservation easement.